



Ayo & Casibari: Aruba's famous rock formations



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Wildfires burn out of control across Los Angeles area and kill 2 as thousands flee homes

By JAIMIE DING, CHRISTOPHER WEBER and JULIE WATSON

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Massive wildfires roaring through the Los Angeles area left neighborhoods in ruins Wednesday, killing at least two people and threatening landmarks made famous by Hollywood as desperate residents escaped through flames, hurricane-force winds and towering columns of smoke.

Three major blazes that erupted just a day earlier blanketed the city with a dangerous, thick cloud of smoke and ash and destroyed homes across the metropolitan area, from the Pacific Coast inland to Pasadena, home of the famed Rose Parade. One of the fires was the most destructive in the modern history of the city of LA.

With thousands of firefighters already attacking the flames, the Los Angeles Fire Department put out a plea for off-duty and out-of-state firefighters to help. The strong winds had temporarily stopped aircraft from dumping water from above until they were able to resume flights.

More than 1,000 structures were destroyed and numerous people were hurt in the fires, including first responders, said Los Angeles County Fire Chief Anthony Marrone.

Images of the devastation showed luxurious homes that collapsed in a whirlwind of flaming embers. Amid the debris was a toppled statue and a blackened motorcycle, its tires melted away.

"This morning, we woke up to a dark cloud over all of Los Angeles. But it is darkest for those who are most intimately impacted by these fires. It has been an immensely painful 24 hours," LA County Supervisor Lindsey Horvath said.

At least 70,000 people were ordered to evacuate — a number that kept changing because evacuation orders were continually being issued, officials said. The



The Palisades Fire ravages a neighborhood amid high winds in the Pacific Palisades neighborhood of Los Angeles, Tuesday, Jan. 7, 2025.

Associated Press

flames marched toward highly populated and affluent neighborhoods, including Calabasas and Santa Monica, home to California's rich and famous. Hollywood stars, including Mark Hamill, Mandy Moore and James Woods, were among those forced to flee.

"We are prioritizing life over everything else," Sheriff Robert Luna said.

The fires have consumed a total of about 22 square miles (56 square kilometers) about half the size of the entire city of San Francisco. Jennie Girardo, a 39-year-old producer and director from Pasadena, said she was alarmed when her neighbor came to check on her. "When I opened my door, it smelled like I was living inside of a fireplace," she said. "Then I also started to see the ash. And I've never seen that in my life. Like raining ash."

Flames moved so quickly that many had little time to escape. Police sought shelter inside their patrol cars, and residents at a senior living center were pushed in wheelchairs and hospital beds down a street to safety in the foothills northeast of LA. On Wednesday, many of those residents were at the Pasadena Con-

vention Center, waiting to hear where they would be staying.

One of the fires ripped through the Pacific Palisades neighborhood, a hillside area along the coast dotted with celebrity homes and memorialized by the Beach Boys in their 1960s hit "Surfin' USA." In the race to get to safety, roadways became impassable when scores of people abandoned their vehicles and fled on foot, some toting suitcases.

"People were getting out of the cars with their dogs and babies and bags," said Kelsey Trainor, who escaped while ash fell all around and fires burned on both sides of the road.

California's wildfire season typically begins in June or July and runs through October, according to the Western Fire Chiefs Association, but January wildfires are not unprecedented. There was one in 2022 and 10 in 2021, according to CalFire. The season is beginning earlier and ending later due to rising temperatures and decreased rainfall tied to climate change, according to recent data. Rains that usually end fire season are often delayed, meaning fires can burn through the winter months,

the association said.

President Joe Biden pledged on Wednesday to sign a federal emergency declaration after arriving at a Santa Monica fire station for a briefing with Gov. Gavin Newsom.

Newsom posted on X that California had deployed more than 1,400 firefighting personnel to combat the blazes. He also dispatched National Guard troops to help. Firefighters from neighboring states also were being asked to assist.

"We are absolutely not out of danger yet," Los Angeles city Fire Chief Kristin M. Crowley said.

The fires burned through Temescal Canyon, a popular hiking area surrounded by dense neighborhoods of multimillion-dollar homes and also jumped famous Sunset Boulevard, burning parts of the Palisades Charter High School, which has been featured in many Hollywood productions, including the 1976 horror movie "Carrie" and the TV series "Teen Wolf."

As it grew, the fire burning in the Pacific Palisades became the most destructive fire in the modern history of the city of Los Angeles.

With an estimated 1,000 structures destroyed and the flames still growing

Wednesday, it is far more destructive than the second-most destructive, according to statistics kept by the Wildfire Alliance, a partnership between the city's fire department and MySafe:LA. Structures refers to homes and other buildings.

The last most destructive fire was the Sayre fire in November 2008 that destroyed 604 structures in Sylmar, the northernmost suburb in the city. Before that, a 1961 Bel Air fire stood for nearly half a century as the most destructive fire in the city's history. It burned nearly 500 houses in the tony hillside enclave, including homes of actor Burt Lancaster, Zsa Zsa Gabor and other celebrities.

Residents were urged to limit water usage. Los Angeles Public Works Director Mark Pestrella said the city's water systems that service homes and businesses were working effectively, but "they are not designed to fight wildfires." More than 100 schools were closed due to fire risk. Southern California Edison shut off service to thousands because of safety concerns related to high winds and fire risks. More than 500,000 could face shutoffs depending on weather conditions, the utility said.

Recent dry winds, including the notorious Santa Anas, have contributed to warmer-than-average temperatures in Southern California, where there's been very little rain so far this season. Southern California hasn't seen more than 0.1 inches (0.25 centimeters) of rain since early May.

The winds increased to 80 mph (129 kph) early Wednesday, according to reports received by the National Weather Service, and could top 100 mph (160 kph) in mountains and foothills. Longtime Palisades resident Will Adams said embers flew into his wife's car as she tried to evacuate, so she jumped out and ran toward the ocean to get out of danger. □

Canadian leaders say Trump's talk about Canada becoming the 51st state isn't funny anymore

By **ROB GILLIES**
Associated Press

TORONTO (AP) — U.S. President-elect Donald Trump's comments that Canada should become the 51st state are no longer a joke and are meant to undermine America's closest ally, Canada's finance minister said Wednesday.

Dominic LeBlanc, the country's point person for U.S.-Canada relations, said Trump was smiling when he first made the comment during a dinner at Mar-a-Lago with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in late November.

"The joke is over," said LeBlanc. "It's a way for him, I think, to sow confusion, to agitate people, to create chaos knowing this will never happen."

Trump keeps floating the idea that Canada should join the United States as the 51st state, saying Tuesday he would not use military force to invade the country, which is home to more than 40 million people and is a founding NATO partner. Instead, Trump said he would rely on "economic force" as he erroneously cast the U.S. trade deficit



Employment Minister Steven MacKinnon, left to right, Innovation, Science and Industry Minister Francois-Philippe Champagne and Finance Minister Dominic LeBlanc arrive for a Liberal caucus meeting in Ottawa on Wednesday, Jan. 8, 2025.

Associated Press

with Canada a natural resource-rich nation that provides the U.S. with commodities like oil as a subsidy.

"It's becoming very counterproductive," LeBlanc said, referring to Trump's rhetoric about Canada. LeBlanc has been talking

to incoming Trump administration officials about increasing border security in an effort to avoid a sweeping 25% tariff that Trump

has threatened to impose on all Canadian products. LeBlanc, recently appointed to the role after the abrupt resignation of the previous finance minister, also announced he won't run to replace Trudeau so he can focus on the tariff threat.

Trudeau announced Monday he will resign as prime minister and will stay on until a new Liberal leader is chosen.

"The timing is awful for sure," said Liberal lawmaker Judy Sgro of the leadership change. "But we will do what we have to do to ensure that Canada stands strong."

Asked about Trump's comments, Sgro said "He should focus on his own issues in his own country, because he's got lots of them."

Canadian Immigration Minister Marc Miller also fired back, dismissing Trump's comments as "ridiculous."

"There is no chance of us becoming the 51st state. I think that this is beneath a president of the United States," Miller said. "I said a few weeks ago that this whole thing was like a South Park episode." □

Blinken says Trump's push for U.S. to take control of Greenland is 'not going to happen'

PARIS (AP) — Outgoing U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken is advising the world "not to waste a lot of time" on what President-elect Donald Trump has been saying about Greenland. Trump made clear again this week that he'd like the semiautonomous territory of Denmark to come under U.S. control and said he would not rule out the use of military force to make that happen.

"We need Greenland for national security purposes," Trump said.

But Blinken said Wednesday that the incoming president's ambitions are unlikely to amount to anything more than talk.

"The idea expressed about Greenland is obviously not

a good one," the senior U.S. diplomat said during a stop in Paris for meetings.

"Maybe more important, it's obviously one that's not going to happen. So we probably shouldn't waste a lot of time talking about it," he said.

France's foreign minister, Jean-Noël Barrot, also played down any possibility of U.S. forces being deployed against Denmark, a U.S. ally in the NATO military alliance.

But Barrot warned nevertheless that Europe must brace for turbulence ahead as other powers throw their weight around.

"Do we think the United States will invade Greenland? The answer is, 'No,'" the French minister said.

"But do we think that we're entering into a period that sees the return of the law of the strongest, the answer is, 'Yes.'"

Europe must become stronger militarily and more economically and commercially competitive in response, Barrot said.

"We have to go a lot further to affirm who we are, what we want," he said. The Danish Prime Minister, Mette Frederiksen, has said she does not believe the United States will use military or economic power to secure control over Greenland and has appealed for U.S. behavior "that is respectful of the Greenlandic people."

In Germany, Chancellor Olaf Scholz said Wednesday

that the principle of inviolability of borders applies to every country no matter how powerful, in a reaction to Trump's remarks that did

not mention the president-elect by name.

"Borders must not be moved by force," Scholz said. □



U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, left, and French Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Jean-Noël Barrot, right, attend a joint press conference after their meeting at the Quai d'Orsay in Paris, France, Wednesday, Jan. 8, 2025.

Associated Press

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joy your meal under warm, starry lights accompanied by live music performances every day, seated either in a relaxing and cool interior area of the restaurant, or outside against a backdrop of the bright, colorful lights of the Palm Beach strip!

More information
L'Avenue is situated at The

Cove Mall in Palm Beach and is open every day from 11am to 10pm for lunch and dinner. To book a reservation or ask for more information, please contact their phone line at +297 6996400, send an e-mail info@lavenuearuba.com, or visit their website at lavenuearuba.com



(Oranjestad)—The Ayo and Casibari Rock Formations are known locally as one of the crucial sites to have in your "off-road" trip itinerary. These naturally formed rock formations as just one of the few places on the island

Ayo & Casibari: Aruba's famous rock formations

that hold a rich history of our culture and of our ancestors.

Ayo

The Ayo Rock Formation is located in the northern part of the island, right on the road that leads you to the Black Stone Beach, and close to the Natural Bridge. The Ayo is a fenced terrain that consists of several giant boulders, resting neatly on top of or side by side each other, adding gorgeous natural architecture to the surrounding "mondi"*. This is also one of the few sites to contain prehistoric markings of our

indigenous ancestors. The Ayo Rock formation contains stairs that lead you to the top of the highest boulder, offering a breath-taking view of the Aruban backyard. The Ayo is usually quiet, as it is situated farther away from the busier parts of the island. However, this is just another charm of the site: the quiet area and the refreshing breeze offer a sense of comfort and peace.

Casibari

Probably the busier rock formation site, the Casibari is situated more in the center

of the island, much closer—and more accessible—to the general public. Just like Ayo, Casibari is a fenced area containing several boulders that lay on top or lean on each other. The best aspect of the Casibari Rock Formation is the accompanying view when you climb up the top of the round, flat bolder. For this position, you can see the majority of the island and the ocean in the south. Right in front of the entrance, there is the Casibari Café and Grill, a great place to get refreshments and snack before continu-

ing your off-road adventure!

Both sites are open free to the public, 24 hours a day. However, unless you are taking a trip with a professional tour guide, there are no guides at the sites to help you climb the rock. So, do be careful when trudging on the boulders, and make sure to befriend any roaming goats you see along the way!

*Mondi: what we call our Aruban wilderness. We don't have forests, or deserts, but we do have mondi! □

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Exploring the Mainstreet of San Nicolas



SAN NICOLAS— At Just 11 miles southeast from Oranjestad you will enter the city San Nicolas, also known as Sunrise City or Chocolate City. A city that is rich in authentic culture and island charm. San Nicolas is Aruba's second largest city and was once a bustling company town dominated by the oil industry since the early 1930's.

Over the course of four decades, its demographics had changed immensely due to a stream of Afro-Caribbean and South American workers who came to fill the jobs in the oil refinery between the 1920's until the 1960's. To this day traces of the multicultural influences in culinary offerings and customs, housing and population are clearly visible in San Nicolas - more than anywhere else on the island.

Flow of history

if you are looking for history San Nicolas has it. Here you will find three amazing museums, The Museum of Industry, the Community Museum and the Carnival Euphoria, all within walking distance from one another.

The Museum of Industry is situated in the Water Tower in San Nicolas and narrates Aruba's industrial history which began in the 19th century. Here you will learn about gold, aloe, phosphate, oil and the tourism industries which made San Nicolas once a bustling business center. Experience the touching stories of those who were part of this history. Nicolaas Store built in 1940 and renovated in 2014 is the home of the Community Museum. The collection is remarkable and spans millennia. Ancient fossils stand next to tableaus of an authentically recreated colonial kitchen and bedroom and 19th-century barber-shop, just to name a few of the items of old-time Aruba that has been preserved. A collection of artifacts and other objects of artistic, cultural, historical, or scientific importance can be found here for the purpose of education or enjoyment. Carnival Euphoria is showcasing Aruba's Carnival. See how are Carnival has developed over the past 65 years. The new San Nicolas In the shadow of the refinery, an art capital is quietly

beginning to grow. This is the new San Nicolas, a place that is starting to become a magnet for all that is young, cool and hip in Aruba. Indeed, San Nicolas has all of the ingredients of an emerging cultural hub — varied history, interesting architecture, and, perhaps most importantly, an urban layout that makes it walkable. As you walk around, the streets are silent but the walls are loud, filled with bright, colorful murals painted by a collection of artists from around

the world. Thanks to the efforts of various art organizations in Aruba, such as Art Rules Aruba and Aruba Art Fair, San Nicolas has had quite the aesthetic makeover with regards to vibrant street art. Each year more and more stunning murals are replacing broken down buildings with colorful art pieces that keep brightening up SunriseCity.

Must See, Do, Buy & Eat

A little bit of everything can be found in the main street. Stores selling shoes, cloth-

ing, jewelry you name it. Arts & crafts by Cosecha store & Creative Center, a design store in which you can immerse yourself in discovering genuine and locally made arts and crafts which reflect the diversification of the Aruban craft heritage and the artistic supply of artisans. Don't miss out on trying the exquisite food offered by the cafes and restaurants or just enjoy a peaceful walk admiring the murals, mosaic benches and all the history San Nicolas has to offer. □

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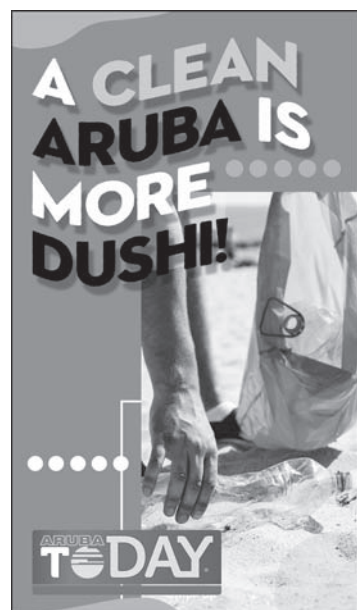
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Daniels and Nix will become a rare rookie QB duo to start in the same NFL postseason



Washington Commanders quarterback Jayden Daniels looks to pass against the Dallas Cowboys during the first half of an NFL football game, Sunday, Jan. 5, 2025, in Arlington, Texas. Associated Press

By JOSH DUBOW
AP Pro Football Writer

The impressive feats from the 2024 rookie quarterback class will carry over into the postseason. Washington's Jayden Daniels and Denver's Bo Nix are expected to make their playoff debuts on Sunday in a rare case of two rookie starting quarterbacks in the same postseason. While there are a few examples of fill-in rookies getting the nod in the playoffs, this will be just the fourth time that two rookie quarterbacks start in the same postseason after making at least six starts during the regular season. It last happened in 2012 when Andrew Luck, Robert Griffin III and Russell Wilson all got playoff starts. The other times came in 2008 with Matt Ryan and Joe Flacco, and 1983 with Hall of Famers John

Elway and Dan Marino. Only seven rookie quarterbacks have won playoff starts, and there's never been a year when more than one did it. A rookie quarterback has never started in the Super Bowl, with Brock Purdy (2022), Mark Sanchez (2009), Flacco (2008), Ben Roethlisberger (2004) and Shaun King (1999) all losing in the conference title game. Daniels and Nix already have had barrier-breaking seasons, with both QBs winning at least 10 starts, producing at least 30 touchdowns rushing and passing, and accounting for at least 4,000 yards of offense on the ground and through the air. Before this season, no rookie QB had ever hit all those marks in a season. Daniels and Nix have some company when it comes to young quarterbacks, with a

record-tying 11 of the 14 projected starters in the postseason in their 20s. That includes four members of the 2018 draft class: Baker Mayfield, Sam Darnold, Josh Allen and Lamar Jackson. This is the fifth time that four QBs from the same draft class started in the same postseason, with the 2018 class also doing it last season, when Mason Rudolph got the nod instead of Darnold. **Run it back** This year's version of the playoffs will have a familiar look. Ten of the teams that made the postseason are back after getting there last season, with only Denver, Minnesota, Washington and the Chargers breaking through after missing out in 2023. The four newcomers are tied for the fewest since the NFL expanded to 12 playoff teams in 1990, with that last happening in 2015. The four previous seasons with 14 playoff teams featured at least six newcomers each season, with seven new teams qualifying in 2022 and eight in 2020. All four division winners in the AFC are repeat champions, with Kansas City (nine straight), Buffalo (five), Baltimore (two) and Houston (two) all going back to back. The only other times since the 2002 realignment that all four division winners in a conference repeated came in the 2019 AFC and the 2012 AFC. □

NHL postpones LA Kings' home game against Calgary due to wildfires, while NFL monitors the situation

By GREG BEACHAM
AP Sports Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The NHL postponed the Los Angeles Kings' home game against the Calgary Flames on Wednesday with several massive wildfires still burning across the greater Los Angeles area. The Kings and Flames were scheduled to play Wednesday night at the Kings' downtown arena. The NBA's Los Angeles Lakers are scheduled to host the Charlotte Hornets in the same arena on Thursday night. "Our hearts are with our

entire Los Angeles community," the Kings said in a statement. "We appreciate the hard working first responders who are diligently working to contain the fire and protect our community. We appreciate the league's support in keeping our fans, staff, and players safe." The NFL is also paying close attention to the potential impact of the fires on the two playoff-bound Los Angeles teams' preparations and the Rams' wild-card postseason game against the Minnesota Vikings scheduled for Mon-

day night at SoFi Stadium in Inglewood. Three major fires were burning in areas of the vast Los Angeles metroplex on Wednesday following two days of extraordinary winds. At least 70,000 people are under evacuation orders, and more than 1,000 structures have been destroyed. The Rams and the Los Angeles Chargers both train in areas not threatened by fires, but both teams are monitoring the air quality and its potential impact on their preparations. □

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 "Serpico" star
- 7 Auction cry
- 11 Venus's love
- 12 Region
- 13 Supply
- 15 Clickable pictures
- 16 Shore eroder
- 18 Washer unit
- 21 Candidate of 2000
- 22 Did the tango
- 24 King Kong, for one
- 25 Spotted
- 26 Letter after sigma
- 27 Marbles, so to speak
- 29 Chilly
- 30 Letter after epsilon
- 31 Cruise stop
- 32 Coffee add-in
- 34 Not talkative
- 40 Buffalo's lake
- 41 Smitten

DOWN

- 1 Buddy
- 2 Bustle
- 3 Dove's cry
- 4 Contained
- 5 Brother's daughter
- 6 Capital on a fjord
- 7 Bible strongman
- 8 Sphere
- 9 Sheltered side
- 10 Pop box
- 14 Relative by marriage
- 16 Yellow gem
- 17 Singer Cara
- 19 Cast member
- 20 Traded
- 21 Ozone, e.g.
- 22 Calendar
- 23 Failure
- 25 Set off
- 28 Longings
- 29 Be submissive

T	A	U	P	E		T	A	S	T	E
U	L	T	R	A		O	N	E	A	L
B	L	U	E	S		S	T	A	R	S
			D	E	B	T		S	P	A
I	T	S	A	D	E	A	L			
R	I	O	T		E	D	I	C	T	S
A	N	D	O	R		A	G	R	E	E
S	T	A	R	E	S		H	E	A	T
			S	C	A	T	T	E	R	S
A	D	A			A	L	A	N		
D	U	C	K	S		K	I	N	G	S
A	D	M	I	T		E	N	S	U	E
M	E	E	T	S		A	G	A	T	E

- 31 Coat on the wall
- 33 Yale students
- 34 Common bill
- 35 Lyricist Gershwin
- 36 Jazz job
- 37 Campaign pro
- 38 Genesis name
- 39 — Moines

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11						12			
13						14			
			15						
	16	17			18		19	20	
21					22				23
24				25			26		
27			28			29			
	30					31			
			32		33				
34	35	36					37	38	39
40					41				
42					43				

1-9

A X Y D L B A A X R
is L O N G F E L L O W

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

1-9

CRYPTOQUOTE

L W B A I I A M P R F L W D
L W P A M M W S W Y W S K X A M P I W
T F S M A M P . — T W A X R W S
W G C N D S R

Cryptoquote: JANUARY IS HERE, WITH EYES THAT KEENLY GLOW, A FROST-MAILED WARRIOR STRIDING A SHADOWY STEED OF SNOW. — EDGAR FAWCETT

Squabble grows as U.S. government holds back 2024 funding from world anti-doping watchdog WADA

By **EDDIE PELLIS**
AP National Writer

The U.S. government did not pay the more than \$3.6 million due to the World Anti-Doping Agency in 2024, making good on a long-running threat anchored in unhappiness with the global watchdog's handling of cases involving Chinese swimmers and others. Those funds, normally distributed by the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, represent about 6% of WADA's annual budget. WADA statutes say representatives of countries that don't pay are not eligible to sit on the agency's top decision-making panels. U.S. drug czar Rahul Gupta is listed as a member of the



Witold Banka, president of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), attends a press conference at the 2024 Summer Olympics in Paris, France, July 25, 2024.

Associated Press

WADA executive committee. Gupta's office did not immediately respond to requests from The Associated Press for comment.

When Gupta directed his office to send the balance of a yearly contribution in 2022, he did so with reservations, along with a letter saying the U.S. absence at the time from key policy-making positions was "a sorry state of affairs." Half of WADA's budget is covered by the International Olympic Committee, with the other half covered by governments across the world, which receive 50% of the spots on key WADA governing committees. The U.S. contribution is double that of Canada, the home country for WADA that puts in the second most money among the more than 180 countries that contribute. The funding fight has been going on for at least the last six years. Dissatisfied over the handling of the Russian doping scandal, the first Trump White House started asking for reforms with the potential of tying them to its annual payment. More recently, WADA's handling of cases involving 23 Chinese swimmers has been a focal point of criticism. A government study that came out in 2020 concluded Americans didn't get their money's worth from the contribution. Shortly after, Congress gave the ONDCP discretion to withhold future funding. In between, tensions have grown between WADA, the U.S. and the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency, which runs the drug-fighting program in the United States. "Unfortunately, the current WADA leaders left the U.S. with no other option after failing to deliver on several very reasonable requests, such as an independent audit of WADA's operations" in the wake of the Chinese doping saga, USA-DA CEO Travis Tygart said. WADA, meanwhile, has chafed at the Rodchenkov Act, a law that allows the U.S. to prosecute people of any nationality involved in doping conspiracies. That bill was signed by Donald Trump at the end of his first term as president. □



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